

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GW, GE, BQG
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SUBJECT: FRG FOREIGN OFFICE ANALYSIS OF THE "SPIEGEL"
MANIFESTO AFFAIR: PART II

REFS: (A) BERLIN 202 (NOTAL)
(B) BONN 226
(C) BERLIN 341 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE SECOND AND FINAL PART OF THE SED OPPOSITION MANIFESTO IN "DER SPIEGEL," THE FRG FOREIGN OFFICE STILL CONSIDERS IT VERY DOUBTFUL THAT AN ORGANIZED OPPOSITION EXISTS WITHIN THE GDR. THE FOREIGN OFFICE ALSO BELIEVES THAT ANY SIGNS OF UNREST IN THE GDR AS A RESULT OF THE MANIFESTO WOULD BE QUICKLY SUPPRESSED. ANOTHER FOREIGN OFFICE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE MANIFESTO WILL PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE DIRECT EFFECT ON THE GDR LEADERSHIP IN GENERAL OR ON HONECKER IN PARTICULAR. ALTHOUGH THE CLOSURE OF THE "SPIEGEL" OFFICE IN EAST BERLIN WAS A HARSH STEP, IT DID NOT COME UNEXPECTEDLY. THE MANIFESTO AFFAIR WILL PROBABLY ONLY TEMPORARILY STRAIN INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. IN ITS PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK, THE FRG WILL CONTINUE TO AVOID TAKING A PUBLIC POSITION ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MANIFESTO. INSTEAD, IT WILL STRESS THE NEED TO CONTINUE THE POLICY OF SMALL STEPS DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THE REMAINING UNITY OF THE GERMAN NATION. IT WILL ALSO POINT OUT THE DANGER OF GIVING HARD-LINERS IN THE GDR AN EXCUSE FOR PURSUING A MORE RESTRICTIVE POLICY AGAINST THE POPULATION. END SUMMARY

1. FOLLOWING UP ON HIS EARLIER BRIEFING ON THE FIRST PART OF THE OPPOSITION MANIFESTO, FRG REP VON BRAUNMUEHL BRIEFED THE BONN GROUP JANUARY 13 ON THE PUBLICATION IN CONFIDENTIAL

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"DER SPIEGEL" OF THE FINAL PART "ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN THE GDR" (REF A) AND ON THE FOREIGN OFFICE'S ANALYSIS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ENTIRE AFFAIR. AFTER A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FINAL SECTION OF THE MANIFESTO, VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID THAT THE GDR LEADERSHIP WOULD HAVE TO TAKE ESPECIALLY SERIOUSLY THE STATEMENT THAT "NO GDR CITIZEN IS OBLIGATED TO OBSERVE CERTAIN POLITICAL LAWS IF THE LEADERSHIP DOES NOT OBSERVE ITS OBLIGATIONS." ALONG WITH THE STATEMENT THAT "PROTEST IS THE CITIZEN'S FIRST DUTY," IT AMOUNTED TO THE POSTULATION OF A RIGHT OF RESISTANCE AGAINST THE PARTY APPARATUS AND A CALL TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. NO OTHER KNOWN DISSIDENT MOVEMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE HAD EVERY UNDERTAKEN SUCH A RADICAL ATTACK ON THE SYSTEM. INDEED, EVEN THE WEST HAD NEVER CRITICIZED THE GDR SO MERCILESSLY.

2. VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID THAT THE RADICALISM OF THE MANIFESTO CORRESPONDED TO A WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT IN THE GDR. ITS STRAIGHT-FORWARD STYLE ALLOWED IT TO BE READILY UNDERSTOOD AND EASILY TRANSMITTED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THESE WERE THE ELEMENTS WHICH MADE IT SO

EXPLOSIVE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS TOO EARLY TO BE ABLE TO
PREDICT ACCURATELY ITS INTERNAL IMPACT, IT WAS UNLIKELY
THAT IT WOULD ACTUALLY LEAD TO ANY EXPRESSIONS OF
SERIOUS UNREST. IN ANY EVENT, THE GDR SECURITY
AUTHORITIES' ACTIONS WOULD BE COMMENSURATE WITH THE
POPULAR RESPONSE TO THE MANIFESTO. SINCE THE SECURITY
APPARATUS APPEARED TO HAVE THE SITUATION FIRMLY UNDER
CONTROL, THERE WAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AFTER THE
INITIAL EXCITEMENT WORE OFF THE GDR WOULD RETURN TO

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ROUTINE MATTERS.

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3. GDR CLOSURE OF THE "SPIEGEL" OFFICE, THE MOST SEVERE MEASURE YET TAKEN AGAINST WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS, WAS STRAINING INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. THE "SPIEGEL" PUBLICATION OF THE MANIFESTO IS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY MORE SERIOUS THAN THE OTHER CASES WHICH LED TO THE EXPULSIONS OF "SPIEGEL" CORRESPONDENT METTKE OR TELEVISION JOURNALIST LOEWE. THE GDR HAD SEEN ITSELF FORCED TO TAKE SUCH AN ACTION OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR THE SOVIETS AND IN ORDER TO REJECT A POLEMICAL ATTACK AGAINST THE STATE AND PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD VIEWED THIS AS A LIKELY GDR COUNTERMEASURE AND, THOUGH HARD, IT WAS NOT AN EXCESSIVE STEP. IT REFLECTED AN ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE. THERE WAS NO REASON TO CONCLUDE THAT THE GDR INTENDED TO TAKE ANY OTHER, FAR-REACHING STEPS AGAINST WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS IN THE COUNTRY.

4. VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID THAT IT WAS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY THAT THE GDR HAD JUSTIFIED ITS ACTION SOLELY AS A RESPONSE TO AN AFFRONT TO ITS HEAD OF STATE AND OTHER LEADERS. IT DID NOT CHARGE THE FRG WITH MASSIVE INTERFERENCE IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS, AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. FINALLY, IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE GDR FOREIGN OFFICE HAD INDICATED TO STATE SECRETARY GAUS JANUARY 9 THAT A STATE MUST CONSIDER THE DEFAMATION OF ITS HEAD OF STATE A VERY SERIOUS MATTER. GAUS HAD BEEN REMINDED THAT MOROCCO HAD BROKEN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE GDR ON ACCOUNT OF A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE CRITICAL OF THE KING. THIS APPEARED TO BE A GDR ATTEMPT TO ENLIST THE FRG'S UNDERSTANDING FOR THE ACTION ("SPIEGEL" CLOSURE) IT WAS CONTEMPLATING AT THE TIME.

5. INDICATIONS FROM THE GDR WERE THAT IT DID NOT WISH
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TO STRAIN UNNECESSARILY INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. IT DID NOT CHARGE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE MANIFESTO. ATTACKS AGAINST THE BND

WERE A PART OF THE RITUAL OF EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
IN SUCH CASES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE SHOULD NOT BE OVER-
ESTIMATED.

6. INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS HAD INDEED BEEN ACUTELY
AFFECTED BY THE CLOSURE OF THE "SPIEGEL" OFFICE, BUT
THERE WAS NO NEED TO FEAR A CONTINUED WORSENING. THE
GDR DOES WANT TO HAMPER PROGRESS IN THE CURRENT ROUND
OF NEGOTIATIONS, AS INDICATED BY THEIR WILLINGNESS
TO CONTINUE TALKS ON THE VETERINARY AGREEMENT ON THE
SAME DAY THE "SPIEGEL" OFFICE WAS CLOSED.

7. VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID THAT A FINAL EVALUATION OF THE
MANIFESTO COULD NOT BE MADE AS LONG AS ITS ORIGINS
REMAIN UNKNOWN. IT WAS POORLY ORGANIZED AND ITS
WRITING STYLE WEAK, BUT THE QUESTIONS RAISED IN IT
CONCERNING ALL-GERMAN POLICY MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.
IT SEEMED TOO SIMPLE TO JUDGE THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE DOCUMENT SOLELY BY ITS LANGUAGE. IT MIGHT BE
THAT BROAD SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION WOULD BE RECEPTIVE
TO JUST THIS KIND OF POLEMICAL AND AGGRESSIVE STYLE. A
MORE SERIOUS FAILING THAN THE LANGUAGE WAS ITS STRATEGY
OF AN ALL-OUT ATTACK. A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN WHICH TOOK
THE EXISTING POWER SITUATION INTO ACCOUNT MIGHT HAVE

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HAD A GREATER CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

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8. VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID A FINAL EVALUATION OF THE MANIFESTO WAS STILL NOT POSSIBLE, BUT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WAS OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES: (A) THE EXISTENCE OF AN ORGANIZED OPPOSITION EITHER WITHIN OR OUTSIDE THE SED REMAINS EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL, AND THE CHANCE OF CREATING ONE AS THE AUTHORS HAD HOPED IS MINIMAL. (B) THE GDR POPULATION PROBABLY AGREES IN LARGE MEASURE WITH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MANIFESTO, BUT IT KNOWS THAT STATE SECURITY AUTHORITIES ARE READY TO SUPPRESS ANY INDICATIONS OF OPPOSITION. (C) IT WILL PROBABLY NOT HAVE ANY DIRECT EFFECT ON THE GDR LEADERSHIP. CRITICISM OF HONECKER WITHIN THE GDR AND SOVIET UNION WILL CONTINUE, BUT THE OUTCOME OF THIS IS UNCERTAIN. FRG ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WOULD BE PROBLEMATIC. (D) THE MANIFESTO'S EFFECT ON INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS IS LIMITED, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE RESERVED POSITION TAKEN BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES ARE PROBABLY ONLY TEMPORARY. (E) IT WILL NOT HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE FRG-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP OR ON BERLIN (IN SPITE OF THE GDR CHARGES THAT THE BND IS MISUSING WEST BERLIN FOR ITS OPERATIONS). (F) THE FRG SHOULD CONTINUE NOT TO TAKE A POSITION IN PUBLIC ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MANIFESTO. THIS ALSO MEANS THAT THE FRG WILL NOT BE MAKING ANY NEGATIVE REMARKS ABOUT THE AUTHORS. (G) THE FOREIGN OFFICE FEELS ITSELF OBLIGED BY THIS AFFAIR TO EXAMINE MORE CLOSELY THE MOOD OF THE GDR POPULATION, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD

TO THE SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. (H) IN ITS PRESS AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD
STRESS THAT CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT INNER-GERMAN
NEGOTIATIONS OFFERS HOPE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE
REMAINING UNITY OF THE GERMAN NATION AND AN IMPROVE-
MENT IN THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE GDR POPULATION.
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THE FRG SHOULD ALSO AVOID UNCONSIDERED SUPPORT FOR THE
MANIFESTO, WHICH WOULD GIVE CERTAIN ELEMENTS ON THE
OTHER SIDE A WELCOME EXCUSE TO PURSUE A MORE RESTRICTIVE
COURSE AGAINST THE POPULATION. THIS POINT SHOULD ALSO
BE MADE IN RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE ATTACKS IN THE
BUNDESTAG BY THE OPPOSITION. (I) THE INTERNATIONAL
REACTION SO FAR HAS BEEN ONE OF INTEREST BUT RESERVE. STOESEL

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